

## Bureau Call

15 June 2020

17:00-19:00 (Geneva time)

# MINUTES

### A. Participants:

Bureau Members:

#### *Present*

- Mr. Ray Pilcher (Chair)
- Mr. Yuriy Bobrov
- Mr. David Creedy
- Mr. C. Ozgen Karacan
- Mr. Lukasz Kroplewski
- Mr. Sergey Ivanovich Shumkov
- Mr. Jacek Skiba
- Mr. Admir Softić
- Mr. Clark Talkington

#### *Apologies*

- Mr. Clemens Backhaus
- Mr. Neil Butler
- Mr. Hasan Erdoğan
- Mr. Pawel Pikus
- Mr. Milanko Savic
- Mr. Igor Yashchenko
- Mr. Zhixin Jin

Secretariat:

- Mr. Michal Drabik

### B. Draft agenda:

1. Preparation for the annual session of the Group.
2. Potential cooperation with the European Union
3. Potential contribution to the online event focused on Ukraine.
4. Any other business

#### 1. Adoption of the agenda

- The agenda was adopted.

#### 2. Preparation for the annual session:

- The Secretariat reported on the situation with organizing the 15th annual session of the Group. The Bureau was informed that over the last few weeks the Secretariat has been working on clarifying procedures that need to be followed in order to deliver an online session of the Group in accordance with the UN rules. At the level of EXCOM it was decided that such session can take place as an unofficial one, during which only critical conclusions and recommendations can be made, subject to their later approval by the Committee.

- The Secretariat suggested to organize such session in mid-July. The Bureau decided that the event should be held on Wednesday 22 July at 16:00 – 18:00 Geneva time.
- Since the session is to be unofficial, all the decisions made in its course will have to be approved at the physical joint meeting of all the Groups that the Sustainable Energy Division plans to hold in September. The September meeting will be hybrid in nature. It is to be held physically in the Palais, but at the same time, due to travel restrictions that are likely to be still in place, it will be also possible to follow it online. At that meeting, each Group will be given some short amount of time to approve all the decisions made before at its informal meeting(s) held online. As for the Group of Experts on CMM, no substantive items are envisaged for the September meeting. It would be limited to a purely administrative formalities, necessary to meet the UN requirements.
- The proposed online meeting will be held in English only and be limited to around 2 hours. It is also possible that it will be followed up (one day later or so) by a joint meeting of the Group and the GMI Coal Sub-committee (subject to GMI's confirmation). Members absent at the online session will have an opportunity to make comments in writing before (a draft report will be distributed to the Group in advance), as well as after the meeting.
- The Secretariat explained all items featured in the draft agenda for the online meeting, which was shared with the Bureau Members before the call.
- The Chair supported the idea of holding the online meeting and underlined that it is important that the Group continues to do its work even under such unusual circumstances like those currently governing on the World. He stressed the importance of the subjects that the Group is working on and highlighted the need for finding funds to continue with an ambitious agenda of the Group, which over the last few years was successfully implemented thanks to extra-budgetary money that is to finish in 2021.
- Mr. Shumkov made a number of comments referring to the draft agenda and the draft report prepared for the upcoming annual session:
  - He observed that the draft agenda gives a lot of attention to the role of fossil fuels in general and not enough to CMM, which should be the main focus of the Group;
  - Commenting on para. 14 of the draft report (*Observing that 80% of today's primary energy is fossil-based and the majority of the world's population and national economies depend on fossil energy, the Group underlined the importance of maintaining a debate on the social, environmental, and economic aspects of extraction and use of fossil fuels that is open, inclusive and fact-based. At the same time, the Group recognized the need for modernization of the global energy sector with a special focus on coal and carbon-intensive industries in order to ensure progress on the essential transition towards a green economy and low-carbon society. The Group of Experts noted that any further work on the letter intended to bring these matters to the attention of the ECE Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General of the United Nations was dependent on obtaining support for such an initiative from the Committee on Sustainable Energy.*) he observed that it is not the task of the Group to discuss the role of fossil fuels in transition of the energy, and noted that he has not seen the letter;
  - Commenting on para. 15 of the draft report he suggested to remove the first part of the text referring to extrabudgetary resources (*The Group of Experts urged the secretariat in cooperation with the Bureau to develop a resourcing strategy and list of potential donors in order to identify extrabudgetary resources necessary for continuation of the effective work of the Group on dissemination and promotion of best practices in methane capture and use from active and closed coal mines.*) and underlined a need to first develop a strategy for effective dissemination activities;
  - Commenting on para. 16 of the draft report (*The Group of Experts offered to contribute within the scope of its expertise to the project on Carbon Neutrality that is being implemented by the Group of Experts on Cleaner Electricity Systems. The Group*

- discussed the need for financial support from the project.*) he noted that financing for the project had already been established, and enquired about the role that the Group of Experts was supposed to play in that activity;
- Commenting on para. 17 of the draft report (*The Group of Experts reviewed the recommendations that it made within the framework of the Pathways to Sustainable Energy project and requested the Committee on Sustainable Energy to endorse the final document containing policy recommendations arising from that project.*) he observed that the Pathways project was lead not by the Group of Experts, and therefore it should not be the Group's task to make such a request to the Committee;
  - Commenting on para. 18 of the draft report (*The Group of Experts discussed the Rules of Procedure for the Group and its Bureau as developed by the secretariat in cooperation with the Groups of Experts, agreed on the final text, and requested the Committee on Sustainable Energy to approve the document.*) he stated that the document was not shared with him, and asked the Secretariat to provide him with the draft Rules of Procedures so that he could comment on them;
  - Commenting on para. 19 of the draft report (*The Group of Experts repeated its strong support for the secretariat's efforts for 2021 or 2022 declared an International Year of Methane.*) he asked for information on how such initiative would affect the activities of the Group of Experts;
  - Commenting on para. 20 of the draft report (*The Group of Experts decided to further explore the proposal made by the European Commission to jointly develop best practices on: (1) monitoring, reporting, and verification of methane emissions from the coal sector on the facility level, (2) monitoring methane emissions from surface mines, and (3) mine closure.*) he enquired who is to conduct the monitoring activities.
- It was requested that Mr. Shumkov provides all his comments in writing allowing the Secretariat and the other Members of the Bureau to respond to them in a proper manner. At the same time, the Secretariat made a few brief comments to the issues raised by Mr. Shumkov:
- It was stated that the attention is given to fossil fuels due to the fact that States' approach to this matter impacts directly an ability of the Group to perform its tasks. As certain countries (and to some extent the highest management of the UN as well) are quite hostile to anything that is related to coal, the Group oftentimes faces difficulties to deliver on its mandated activities;
  - With regard to the comment made on para. 14 of the draft report, the Secretariat responded that the latter was not developed yet, as the Chairs of both Groups would like to first hear about the official position on fossil fuels of the Committee on Sustainable Energy and the Sustainable Energy Division. It is for that reason that the item was put in the agenda;
  - With regard to the comment made on para. 16 of the draft report, the Secretariat responded that the reference to the financing was made in order to receive a clarification from the project manager whether the Group's involvement in the project would provide the Group with access to some of the funds dedicated to that task;
  - With regard to the comment made on para. 17 of the draft report, the Secretariat responded that the Pathways project was a cross-cutting activity lead by the Committee, which relied on contributions from all of its subsidiary bodies, including the Group of Experts on CMM. It was also observed that the Group has already made its recommendations to the project last year and this year, due to the fact that the conclusion of the project was delayed, obtained an additional opportunity to either confirm them, or to amend them in a desired way;
  - With regard to the comment made on para. 18 of the draft report, the Secretariat responded that due to the fact that the Rules of Procedures are being drafted for all

Groups at once, the process takes longer than expected and they are not ready yet. The Secretariat assured the Bureau that it would share with the Members a draft document as soon as it is ready. Should that not happen before the online meeting, the document will be developed by a written procedure, thus allowing all interested Parties to comment on it;

- With regard to the comment made on para. 19 of the draft report, the Secretariat responded that all matters related to the idea of the International Year of Methane will be clarified at the online session by the Director of the Sustainable Energy Division. It is for that reason that the item was put in the agenda;
- With regard to the comment made on para. 20 of the draft report, the Secretariat suggested that all issues related to a potential cooperation with the EU are discussed during the conference call that Secretariat offered to organize.

### **3. Potential cooperation with the European Union**

- The Secretariat informed the Bureau that there is a potential to establish a cooperation with the EU. As it was explained the EU would like the Group to develop two set of good practices/standards that the EU could later adopt:
  - One on monitoring reporting and verification (MRV) of methane emissions from the coal sector. They would have to be on the level of detail of at least the OGMP's standards for Oil and Gas Sector (see <https://ccacoalition.org/en/content/oil-and-gas-methane-partnership-technical-guidance-documents>). Should the Group be able to develop a project proposal, the EU could put it into its strategy and release it with the upcoming communication planned for September. The EU is willing to work with the Group on this task. The Secretariat shared with the Bureau information that the EU is to develop such standards anyway, with or without the Group's support. Consequently, the Secretariat presented its position that it is better to be involved in that work and have an impact on its final result, rather than be only a bystander with no say in that matter. The Secretariat advocated that the Group be a platform for, and a facilitator of negotiations between the States, since the latter will have to bear the main burden of developing such standards, as the issue is political in nature and requires finding a consensus among all involved Parties. The Secretariat highlighted an importance of active involvement of all member States, which would be asked to provide experts representing the Governments, as well as the industry to work on that matter.
  - One on mine closure, providing guidance on how to properly seal mines so that they do not emit methane after cessation of the mining activities.
- The issues of the exact expectations, timing and access to EU financing were raised.
- Mr. Skiba pointed to the fact that it would be useful to determine the intentions behind the EU's plan to develop standards on MRV of methane emissions from the coal sector. He indicated that the goal should be to incentivize mine operators to develop installation for CMM capture and use, rather than simply punish them by imposing financial penalties for releasing methane to the atmosphere. He underlined that the issue is very sensitive for all EU mining states and that the mining companies in those countries see any such Brussels' attempts as a potential threat.
- The Secretariat offered to organize a conference call between the interested Bureau Members and the EU in order to discuss that issue in greater detail.
- The Chair supported the idea of having a call, indicating that it would allow to clarify the uncertainties before making a decision. He said that, in general the idea of working with the EU might be of benefit to the Group as, according to his knowledge, the EU reports on emission methane matters are oftentimes very inaccurate and full of misconceptions that need to be straightened. In addition, the Chair referred to the fact that those standards will be developed anyway, as the EU is determined to do so, and observed that in such context it would be unwise to miss an opportunity to have an impact on them. Finally, he also observed that the EU is currently very much interested in the issue of mine closure and AMM, and has

a lot of money for dealing with those matters that the Group could get access to, and thus finance the activities that it would perform in cooperation with the Union.

#### **4. Potential contribution to the online event focused on Ukraine**

- The Secretariat informed the Bureau that there is a potential to contribute to the online event that might be organized by another Group of Experts. The event will address the problem of methane emissions in Ukraine across different extractive sectors. It was underlined that so far, it is only an idea which is to be further developed, only if there is a sufficient interest among the stakeholders.
- A proposed draft structure for the event is as follows:
  - Overview of UNECE Best Practice Guidances for CMM and AMM with Q&A on its applicability in Ukraine (experts from the Group of Experts on CMM)
  - Overview of UNECE Best Practice Guidance for methane management in gas sector with Q&A on its applicability in Ukraine (experts from the Group of Experts on Gas)
  - A relationship between energy, environment, and security (e.g. OSCE)
  - Financing the transition to a sustainable energy system (e.g. EBRD)
  - UNECE work on pathways and interplay between Renewable and fossil-based energy (Group of Experts on Renewable Energy and Group of Experts on Gas)
  - Brainstorming on possible avenues of action for Ukraine
- The Secretariat observed that Ukraine is a country with a big and well-developed coal sector. At the same time the country faces a number of challenges. Many Ukrainian mines are located in a conflict zone, which makes it difficult to monitor methane situation in the region in question, as well as the standards, whether environmental or safety ones, that are being applied in the mines in the said territory. The Secretariat pointed to the fact that over the last few years CMM updates from Ukraine presented at the Group's meetings always missed data from Donbas. In this context, it was noted that nowadays, due to the pandemic, the whole world relies to an unprecedented extent on online events. Such situation was said to provide the Group with an opportunity to engage with stakeholders from Donbas, which otherwise could not be a part of a discussion, and to obtain a valuable overview of the mining and CMM situation in that coal basin. It was stressed that the event would be fully apolitical, and it would focus only on technical, environmental, and economic matters. At the same time, it was added that the meeting could bring to the table people, which otherwise would not talk to one another, and thus help to establish a technical dialogue between mining practitioners and authorities in Kiev and in Donbas.
- The Chair supported the idea of contributing to the event pointing to the facts that currently information from Donbas is sparse, that methane emissions and mining safety issues are most likely not given sufficient attention in the region preoccupied with hostilities, and that opportunity to get involved in the coal-rich region, which for the last few years was beyond the Group's reach is worth pursuing.
- Mr. Talkington requested the Secretariat to keep the Bureau informed about the progress with preparation for that event, observing that it is hard to discuss the Group's involvement in it without having more information about its exact scope, objectives, and the targeted audience.
- Mr Creedy found the idea worthwhile, yet he raised the issue of interpretation and the duration of the event. The Secretariat responded that both are valuable points that have to be addressed, adding that unfortunately, in light of the current technical capabilities of the UN, simultaneous interpretation for online events does not seem to be a viable option.
- Mr. Karacan supported the idea, seeing a big added value in getting engaged in the region that otherwise would not be accessible to the Group, and in bringing together experts that otherwise would not interact with one another.

## **5. Any other business**

- The Secretariat asked the Bureau whether it would be interested in trying to obtain ECOSOC's endorsement for the Best Practice Guidance on AMM, similar to the one that was given to BPG on CMM by the decision 2011/222.
- The Chair supported the idea, and no Member of the Bureau objected it.
- The Secretariat informed the Bureau that in order to pursue such endorsement it would be necessary to prepare a draft of a requested decision that would need to be submitted for the Committee's approval and later to ECOSOC for its consideration.
- The Secretariat was tasked with preparing the first draft.
- It was decided that due to the fact that there was no interpretation during the call, all members will have an opportunity to provide their comments to the Secretariat within the few days after receiving the minutes from the call.
- Should no objections be received to the ideas of (1) arranging a call with the EU on potential cooperation on matters related to methane emissions from the call sector, (2) contributing as a Group to the discussed potential event in Ukraine, and (3) pursuing the ECOSOC endorsement for BPG on AMM, the Secretariat will act accordingly.

## **6. End of the meeting.**

- The Chair and the secretariat thanked participants for their time and involvement in the call.
- The meeting was closed.